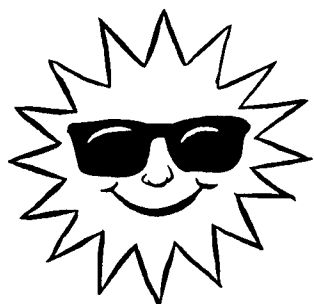


***Department
of Human
Services***

Articles in Today's Clips
Thursday, July 13, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



Important story at this spot

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The Ann Arbor News

IN BRIEF

Thursday, July 13, 2006

Crew breaks into car to check on toddler

Authorities broke into a car parked outside Briarwood Mall in Ann Arbor on Wednesday evening after a toddler was discovered locked inside with no adults present.

Police and firefighters were called to the parking lot outside JC Penney at about 7:30 p.m. where a small girl appeared unresponsive in the car, reports said. It was not known at that time how long the 2-year-old girl had been in the car.

Firefighters were able to get inside the car and found the girl was sleeping and appeared unharmed, reports said.

When the girl's 30-year-old Ypsilanti mother returned to the car, she said she had been making a credit card payment at JC Penney, reports said.

The case will be forwarded to the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office to review for possible fourth-degree child abuse charges.

NEWS IN A MINUTE: Macomb and the Pointes

GROSSE POINTE FARMS: Woman with 42 cats nears deal in animal abuse case

July 13, 2006, Detroit Free Press

A 57-year-old Grosse Pointe Farms woman who kept dozens of cats in her home is nearing a plea deal with prosecutors.

Sylvia Gray was in Grosse Pointe Farms Municipal Court on Wednesday to answer to charges of animal abuse. Detective Lt. Rich Rosati said Gray will likely now face one charge of animal abuse and one count of contributing to the delinquency of a minor. She had two teenage children living with her.

Rosati said Gray will likely get probation and would not be allowed to have an animal. Gray originally faced a larceny charge, two counts of contributing to the delinquency of a minor and multiple counts of animal abuse.

Gray was a volunteer at All About Animals Rescue in Eastpointe, which takes in animals. Members of the agency told police she refused to return up to 20 cats in her care after her relationship with the agency ended. An investigation led police to inspect Gray's home May 10 to see whether she had complied with a city ordinance that limits the number of animals per house to two dogs and two cats.

When her house, on Lakeview off of Kercheval, was searched, police discovered 42 cats, three dogs, six birds, floors covered with cat feces and a stench that permeated the home. Gray is due back in court July 26.

OAKLAND BRIEFS

Detroit Free Press - July 13, 2006

WATERFORD: Child protection committee to hold public meeting

The Michigan House Special Committee on Child Protection will hold a hearing at 12:30 p.m. today in Conference Room B at the Oakland Schools building at 2111 Pontiac Lake Road. The committee was formed to review the circumstances surrounding the death of 7-year-old Ricky Holland and help the state do a better job of protecting children. House members who are to attend include Rep. David Law, R-Commerce Township; Rep. Stephen Adamini, D-Marquette, and Rep. Barbara Vander Veen, R-Allendale.

The hearing, which is open to the public, is expected to last an hour or two. Among those who are expected to testify are Oakland County Circuit Judge James Alexander and Oakland County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley. Others who fill out a form can address the committee, time permitting.

COUNTY-WIDE: 3 named to board of Oakland Family Services

Oakland Family Services, a nonprofit human service organization that offers foster care, adoption, substance abuse counseling and geriatrics programs, added three new members to its Board of Directors this month: Joe Dumars, Stephen Pickett and Dan Pienta. Dumars of Bloomfield Hills is a former NBA player and current president of the Detroit Pistons. Pickett, who lives in Birmingham, is the vice president and chief information officer at the Penske Corp., a transportation services company in Bloomfield Hills. Pienta, who lives in Troy, is the senior vice president and managing director of Northern Trust Bank's Bloomfield Hills office.

Assault suspect had violated parole in Illinois

Thursday, July 13, 2006

By Rex Hall Jr.- rhall@kalamazoogazette.com 388-7784

An Illinois parolee charged with sexually assaulting a 15-year-old Kalamazoo boy Sunday was wanted on an arrest warrant charging him with violating terms of his parole, officials say.

Illinois Department of Corrections authorities declined to say how 39-year-old Shermaine L. Wright violated parole, but confirmed he was not allowed to be in Michigan after his April release from prison.

Wright is now in a one-person cell at the Kalamazoo County Jail, isolated from other inmates, charged with three counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety officers arrested Wright on Sunday morning at a Kalamazoo residence where he was staying with relatives, after the teen reported the alleged sexual assault, investigators have said. Detectives have declined to release other details, including where the alleged assault occurred.

Family members of the teen said Wednesday that they are struggling with feelings of shock and anger and are keeping close watch on the boy.

Sitting outside of his home in north Kalamazoo on Wednesday, the teen's father said his son is doing as well as could be expected as he recovers from his injuries, including cuts to his arms, back and legs. His family members plan to seek counseling for the boy, he said.

“It's just messed up for this to happen to my son,” the father said. “I can't believe that another human out there would do this to a kid.”

The boy knew Wright for a short time and met him while the two were working together renovating a house, the father said. The boy's great-grandmother said that when she saw the teen Tuesday, he sat quietly.

“It's just hurt him real bad,” she said.

“The main thing is to get him well and back on track before school starts.”

Wright is scheduled to be in court July 20 for a preliminary examination, during which a judge considers whether there is enough evidence to send the case to trial.

Wright was released from prison in April after serving about 16 years of concurrent 24-year sentences for first-degree murder and armed robbery, according to the Illinois Department of Corrections Web site. According to court records, he was a lookout for two other men who stabbed to death a Chicago jewelry store manager during a 1990 robbery.

Jorge Montes, chairman of the Illinois Prisoner Review Board, said Wright had initially been released in 2002, but was sent back to prison for violating terms of his parole.

Montes said Wright was cited in prison for offenses that included spitting on a sergeant, disobeying orders, intimidation, threats and fighting.

If convicted of first-degree criminal sexual conduct in Michigan, he faces a sentence of up to life in prison.

Lawsuit considered in reported choking of schoolgirl

Thursday, July 13, 2006

COREY MITCHELL THE SAGINAW NEWS

The guardians of an 8-year-old child who said a teacher choked her during summer school classes at Webber Elementary School are considering legal action against the Saginaw School District.

School officials are investigating the incident, which the second-grader said occurred June 27. The veteran instructor, who taught at Loomis Elementary School last year, and the second-grader have not had contact since June 29, when school officials said they became aware of the allegations.

The teacher placed her fingers around the eager-to-please child's throat after she pulled down a projector screen in class, the mother and grandmother said. The teacher had asked another student to do it, the 8-year-old admitted.

Charlotte Swilley, the mother of the student, isn't satisfied with the speed or openness of the investigation.

"They haven't called me," Swilley said. "If a child hit a teacher, the child would've been kicked out of school for the whole year, but this woman could keep her job."

Not having classes the week of July 3 slowed the probe, not idleness, said district spokesman Michael Manley.

"We take each one of these reports seriously," he said.

An investigator from the Human Resources Department and a campus security officer have interviewed staff and students this week and should complete their report by Monday at the latest, said Thomas Barris, assistant superintendent for human resources and labor relations. School officials asked the teacher to leave summer school and she complied. She remains an employee of the district.

Meantime, Swilley said she plans to transfer her three children to Bridgeport-Spaulding Community Schools for the fall.

The attack left no bruises, said the child's grandmother, Margie Schnell, but that didn't stop her blood from boiling.

"I wish I knew who that teacher was," Schnell said. "I was steamed up, ready to fight. It's not right. She needs to be prosecuted because she might do it to another child. We need to find a good lawyer."

The incident marks at least the second time in five months that a district teacher has faced allegations of student abuse.

Former Loomis Elementary School instructor Jackulyn "Jackie" Pockrandt, a 15-year district employee resigned in April after admitting she bound two of her kindergarten students with duct tape.

The incidents are cause for concern, Barris said, but not indicative of how most teachers handle student discipline.

"It causes us to be cautious," Barris said. "But I don't think this is a trend or a pattern that's developed. Right now, it's an allegation."

Summer classes in the district conclude today.

Saginaw Education Association President Mary Ann Dupuis declined comment on the investigation.

Traverse City Record Eagle

Conversation lands Csapo in jail

Chat with wife apparently violated court order

BY IAN C. STOREY

istorey@record-eagle.com

TRAVERSE CITY — A conversation between Ricky Csapo and the woman he is charged with assaulting landed the Traverse City mayor pro tem behind bars for violating a court order.

Csapo, 52, was led to the Grand Traverse County Jail in handcuffs Wednesday after 86th District Court Judge Thomas Phillips ruled Csapo violated a no-contact order with his wife, Cynthia Csapo, before he was scheduled to meet with special assistant state attorney general Erin House. House requested a hearing Wednesday after several court employees alerted her to the contact between the Csapos, a violation of an order issued by Phillips last week.

Phillips ruled after an hour-long special hearing that there was enough evidence to revoke Ricky Csapo's bond and sent him to jail until Friday morning.

Cynthia Csapo testified under oath that she had no direct contact with her husband, that she was instead talking through a friend who accompanied her to the courthouse.

"The court had a hard time believing that today," Phillips said of her testimony.

Ricky Csapo was charged with misdemeanor domestic violence after he allegedly assaulted his wife during an argument June 23 on West Front Street in downtown Traverse City.

Witnesses told police Csapo and his wife argued along West Front Street and Csapo allegedly forced the back of her head into a large plate glass window.

House called several court employees, including herself, to testify during the hearing before Phillips.

"It appears clear to me that it was a blatant violation, chit-chatting with his wife in the hallway as if the order didn't apply to him," she told Phillips.

One of the witnesses, Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Lt. Bryan Marrow, said he was at the courthouse to post legal notices when he saw the couple talking.

"It was obvious they were speaking," he said.

Defense attorney Clarence Gomery argued during the hearing that the contact was "incidental" and said the Csapos maintain separate residences and haven't had any other contact since the original court order.

"We are here about the victim," said Gomery. "What (witnesses) saw and believe they saw isn't what happened."

Csapo is a retired Grand Traverse County sheriff's deputy who was elected to the city commission in 2001. He pleaded not guilty to the charge and told the Record-Eagle the incident was a "misunderstanding of the facts."

Csapo wasn't arrested that evening nor required to submit to tests to determine whether he'd consumed alcohol, despite witness statements that he was inebriated.

Both Traverse City police Capt. Steve Morgan and another officer reported Csapo was profane and appeared "highly intoxicated."

But Morgan "concluded" there wasn't enough evidence at the scene to merit an arrest and allowed Csapo and his wife to walk home, according to his report.

House testified Wednesday that she saw the Csapos talking repeatedly in the district court lobby while she was conducting pre-trial hearings nearby.

"They were engaged in a conversation, which seemed to be light-hearted," she said.

Gomery asked House what exactly she had heard.

"You don't know who was saying what or what was being said?" Gomery asked House on cross-examination.

But Phillips said the testimony of the witnesses made it clear that the contact was not

"incidental" and, though it did not appear threatening, was still a violation of his order.

"Occasionally, incidental contact we overlook," he said. "It happens. This was beyond incidental contact."

The Ann Arbor News

3 men charged in teens' slayings

2 Ecorse area men arrested in drive-by shooting; police still seeking third suspect

Thursday, July 13, 2006

BY AMALIE NASH News Staff Reporter

Three Wayne County men were charged Wednesday with the deaths of two Ypsilanti Township teenagers hit by gunfire sprayed into a mobile home Sunday night. Police say the incident was triggered by a dispute between a girl and her former boyfriend.

Two of the men were arraigned at the Washtenaw County Jail on Wednesday afternoon, and police are still searching for the third man. Authorities did not reveal which of the men they believe fired guns or what role they believe each man played in the Sunday night shooting.

No charges have been filed against the ex-girlfriend of the owner of the mobile home where the shooting occurred. Police would not say whether they are seeking charges against her or whether they believe she was present when the shooting occurred.

Charged in the slayings were Joshua Tackett, 20, Paul Copas, 22, and Tony Tard, 30, all of the Ecorse area. Each faces two counts of open murder in the deaths of 14-year-old Krilissa Feldmann and 17-year-old Scott Bonar and two counts of using a weapon to commit a felony. Tackett and Copas were arraigned Wednesday and are being held without bond. Police have been looking for Tard for nearly two days, but have been unable to locate him.

News of the arrests was met with relief by family members and friends of the victims, but they questioned why the ex-girlfriend remains free.

Washtenaw County Sheriff Dan Minzey said the shooting was precipitated by an earlier argument at the mobile home around 4 p.m. Sunday.

Clint Ousley, the owner of the home, told The Ann Arbor News earlier this week that his ex-girlfriend showed up with several men who broke a window at the mobile home and threw a crowbar at him. He said he threw the crowbar back, breaking their van window.

At 11:20 p.m. Sunday, more than 20 bullets were fired into the mobile home.

"It has appeared from early on that this had to do with a relationship," Minzey said. "We've been piecing it together, and it's circumstantial. We don't have any witnesses to say they saw the shooting."

Sheriff's Cmdr. Dave Egeler said additional people could face charges as the investigation unfolds. He also said additional charges could be levied against the three men since two other teens inside the home suffered gunshot wounds.

Egeler would not say how police identified the three suspects, but said they were all acquainted with Ousley's ex-girlfriend. He declined to say whether any weapons have been recovered. Lorie Feldmann, Krilissa's mother, said she had never heard any of the suspects' names before. She also said she wants to see charges filed against the ex-girlfriend.

Krilissa Feldmann would have turned 15 Wednesday. Her father, Timothy Feldmann, was arrested early Wednesday and charged with domestic violence against his wife and 12-year-old son that morning.

Lorie Feldmann said the stress of their daughter's death led to the early-morning incident. "The way he copes is to hold it all in, and he exploded," she said. "It's been very difficult." The father was released on bond, but a no-contact order was issued preventing him from going home. Lorie Feldmann said she didn't know how that would affect the visitation and funeral planned Saturday for her daughter.

Lee Mayzes, whose 16-year-old son dated Feldmann for two years, said she was glad to hear arrests had been made in the case. She said eight friends had been hanging out in the mobile home, but two left to go to the store before the gunfire erupted that night. Feldmann died in the arms of her boyfriend, Matt Craiger.

"It's a lot of comfort that two people have been caught and they're looking for another person," Mayzes said.

Copas said during his arraignment that he works in the roofing business with his father and is the single father of a 3-year-old son. A public defender said at the hearing that Copas has significant ties to the Ecorse community and no prior criminal record, but a magistrate denied bond for him. Copas' family members declined to comment after he was arraigned.

County Assistant Prosecutor Eric Gutenberg called Copas an "instrumental principal" in the crime. "The seriousness of these offenses cannot be overstated," he said. Tackett's attorney said his client voluntarily surrendered and had been interviewed by police Wednesday. Both men stood mute to the charges.

Copas was arrested Monday, and Tackett was taken into custody Tuesday. A preliminary hearing for Copas was set for July 19, and Tackett's hearing was scheduled for July 26.

Police are asking anyone who has information on Tard's whereabouts to call 911 or the sheriff's tip line at 734-973-7711.

Deadbeat parents now losing their rides

Thursday, July 13, 2006

By CRYSTAL HARMONTIMES WRITER

Bay County court officials have a message to parents who are ignoring their child support obligations: Make arrangements to pay, or you may find yourself making arrangements for rides.

Delinquent parents may wake up to find a bright orange boot that says "Child Support" attached to their vehicles in the latest crackdown by Friend of the Court enforcers to collect past due support. And if the boot doesn't prompt payment, the vehicles may be auctioned off to generate some cash for custodial parents.

"We're not waiting for a cream puff of a car," said Assistant Friend of the Court Dennis J. Bergevin. "That's the point we want to make to those people out there who are not paying."

The two latest vehicles impounded by Bay County Sheriff's Deputy Robert C. Lee will go up for auction next week, and they're not exactly show-room ready. The 1987 convertible yellow Mustang isn't currently running, and the 1991 red Chevy pickup has its share of rust.

"We're not just going after diamonds," said Liz Nowak, senior enforcement specialist with the Bay County Friend of the Court. "We're going after charcoal, too."

Interested parties can place bids on the vehicles - as is, where is - starting Tuesday. They're parked in the parking lot of the Bay County Court Facility, 1230 Washington Ave. Sealed bids can be turned in at the court's front entrance through Aug. 2. Anyone with questions about the cars can call Lee at 895-4119.

Seizing property - be it a motorcycle, a boat, a car or real estate - is an effective tool to get deadbeat parents to come to grips with their unpaid debt to their children, Bergevin said.

Sometimes, the big orange "Child Support" boot placed on their vehicle can bring them running into the office with their checkbook, but other times, the vehicles are auctioned off, with proceeds going to the child's custodial parent or guardian.

Some past auction items, such as a Harley-Davidson motorcycle seized from a deadbeat mom, brought higher-than-market value bids, Bergevin said. Sometimes, the parents who've had their vehicles seized will bid on them to get them back, such as the man who won back his Lincoln Continental for \$11,000 - money that brought his payments up to date.

Lee, Nowak and Bergevin have seen how creative some parents can be when it comes to hiding their assets and income: They might put a car in their mother's name, work for cash under the table, or drift from place to place to avoid being tracked down. Nowak recently gained \$40,000 for a custodial parent by placing a lien on a house and collecting when the parent sold it.

Michigan law also allows prosecution of felony child abandonment charges in the most extreme cases of failure to pay child support.

"It's amazing how somebody with no income, when they end up in jail, are a value to somebody, because they usually manage to come up with some money, especially in the summer," Bergevin said.

One out-of-state resident was recently surprised by Lee, who sprung on him at the conclusion of a family get-together and arrested him on a child support warrant. Drivers licenses can be suspended, too, a move that usually doesn't happen until parents are six months behind in support.

But Bergevin stresses that his office isn't looking to jail anyone, even if they have a warrant for their arrest, if the person is willing to cooperate in making payments. "Our focus is cooperation, not punishment," Bergevin said.

Lee plays an important role in securing that cooperation. The full-time deputy, funded through a state grant, focuses solely on enforcing child support orders. Since taking the job nine years ago, he's collared 989 suspected child-support violators.

- Crystal Harmon is a staff writer for The Times. She may be reached at 894-9643 or by e-mail at charmon@bc-times.com

Unger's mom can seek visitation

She asks court to let her see her grandsons

BY L.L. BRASIER

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

July 13, 2006

Bette Rosenthal, mother of convicted killer Mark Unger, moved another step in her fight to see her grandsons Wednesday when an Oakland County judge ruled she could seek visitation under Michigan's Grandparents Rights Act.

But Oakland County Family Court Judge Linda Hallmark ruled Rosenthal, who lives in Florida, will have to wait until after a trial is held to terminate Unger's parental rights to his sons, Max, 13, and Tyler, 10. That court date is Aug. 28.

Unger was convicted last month of first-degree murder in the 2003 killing of his wife, Florence Unger, whose body was found floating in Lower Herring Lake in Benzie County. He will be sentenced Tuesday to life in prison. The boys, now temporary wards of the state, have been living with Florence Unger's parents, Harold and Claire Stern of Huntington Woods.

During a morning of legal wrangling, Bloomfield Hills attorney Dan Victor argued that Rosenthal should be granted regular visitation to ensure that she continues her relationship with the boys.

"We have two boys who have lost their mother. Their father may very well be taken from them for the rest of their lives, and now, perhaps the third most important member of their lives," Victor said.

State attorney James Delaney, however, argued that the Grandparents Rights Act did not apply in such cases, and warned that a visitation order for Rosenthal would mean "saddling" the Sterns in the years to come. The Sterns are expected to try to adopt the boys once Mark Unger's rights are terminated.

But the judge ruled the act did, indeed, apply in Rosenthal's case.

"Obviously, there is a great amount of tension in this case. It's just a tragedy for every single person involved, and of course these children are caught in the middle," Hallmark said.

A hearing date on Rosenthal's motion for visitation has not been set. Once Unger's rights have been terminated, Rosenthal has no legal standing. However, because she made her petition to the court before his rights are terminated, that petition will be acknowledged by the court.

On June 21, a Benzie County jury convicted Unger of murder in his wife's death. Prosecutors said Unger pushed his wife over the wooden railing of a deck at the Watervale resort in October 2003. He is in the Benzie County jail.

Contact **L.L. BRASIER** at 248-858-2262 or brasier@freepress.com.

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Grandparents' rights in Michigan

Under Michigan law, grandparents can seek visitation with their grandchildren if they can show that ending the relationship will cause a "substantial risk of emotional, mental or physical harm."

Grandparents can seek visitation with their grandchildren under these circumstances:

- If an action for divorce, separation or annulment between the child's parents is pending before the court.
 - If the child's parents are divorced, legally separated, or have had the marriage annulled.
 - The child's parent is dead, and the dead parent is the child of the grandparent.
 - Legal custody has been given to a person other than the child's parent, and the child does not reside in the home of a parent.
- Courts, in granting visitation, look at the relationship between the children and the grandparent, and the grandparent's fitness as a caretaker.

L.L. Brasier

Unger's mom waits to see grandchildren

Judge won't rule until August hearing

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

PONTIAC -- The mother of a convicted killer must wait until her son's Aug. 28 neglect hearing to learn whether she will receive a court order to see her grandchildren.

Bette Rosenthal of Islamorada, Fla., the mother of Mark Unger, went before Family Court Judge Linda Hallmark on Wednesday seeking an order for grandparents' visitation rights to Unger's sons, Max, 12, and Tyler, 10.

Unger, 45, of Huntington Woods was convicted June 21 of first-degree murder in the 2003 killing of his wife, Florence, 37, at a Michigan resort and faces a mandatory life sentence next week. He's also the subject of a neglect hearing to terminate his parental rights.

Rosenthal is concerned if Unger's parental rights end, she no longer will be able to visit with the two boys.

"I'm not going to make a ruling until we have a decision in the neglect case," Hallmark told Rosenthal Wednesday. "This is just tragic for every single person who is involved, and of course, the children are caught in the middle.

"I would hope the parents could resolve differences. They (children) have suffered enough." In a complaint filed against the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office and Michigan Department of Human Resources, Rosenthal claims she was repeatedly denied visitation by Harold and Claire Stern, the boys' maternal grandparents. The Sterns have had temporary custody of the boys for 18 months and are expected to adopt them.

During Unger's murder trial, the Sterns said they handled visitation according to the court. Hallmark gave the Sterns the right to determine visitation and claimed they allowed monitored visits, which Rosenthal disputes.

Court-appointed guardian, attorney William Lansat, recommended no visits during the trial. After the conviction, he suggested no visits with Rosenthal until the boys had counseling.

Outside the courtroom, Rosenthal's attorney, Daniel R. Victor, was confident Hallmark would provide a fair hearing next month and he would be able to address fears the boys might be further traumatized.

"She (Rosenthal) isn't going to talk to the children about the case, she just wants to give them her unconditional love," Victor said.

In a related matter, Unger defense attorney Robert S. Harrison wants Benzie Circuit Judge James Batzer to dismiss the jury verdict or permit a new trial because of the "weight of evidence."

Harrison wants to argue that the prosecution's theory of how Florence Unger died relies on the speculation of Oakland County Medical Examiner Ljubisa Dragovic and is not supported by evidence.

You can reach Mike Martindale at (248) 647-7226 or mmartindale@detnews.com.

State Gets Two Family-To-Family Sites

MIRS, Wednesday, July 12, 2006

Wayne and Macomb counties have been selected as two of the 15 counties nationwide that are being recognized as anchor sites for the Family-to-Family program.

The program is a partnership among the Department of Human Services (DHS), families and communities to improve the safety of foster kids and reduce the disruption in foster kids' lives as they move through the system.

The approach gets all of the people who are involved in the kids' lives — parents, teachers, social workers and community representatives — together to help the kids move along, according to the DHS.

County named part of model family program

Detroit News, July 13, 2006

Wayne County was designated Wednesday as one of 15 national sites to model the "Family to Family" initiative, a program developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to keep kids out of foster care. Macomb County also was tabbed for the program that encourages families, communities and state Department of Human Services workers to provide special help to families in danger of having children removed from their homes.

GIVING AND LIVING: Helping struggling families

July 13, 2006

By Jack Kresnak, Detroit Free Press

Who is she?	Carol Walters, 57, of Milford, founder and president of the Women's Caring Program, which is holding its annual Twilight Gathering at Walters' home today. Her husband, Pete, and sons Matt, 17, and Joe, 14, are helping out.
What is the Women's Caring Program?	It started in 1979 as the Women's Cocktail Party, a group of women working in state government who got together once a summer for potluck and drinks. Eventually, the group dropped the dishes-to-pass concept in favor of catering, and members started to raise money that was donated to a fund for uninsured children run by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. The group incorporated in 1995 as a nonprofit charitable organization, choosing to use its initials WCP, because members didn't think the IRS would grant charitable status if the word "cocktail" was in the name. Women's Caring Program became the group's new name in 1997 when the state created the MiChild program to provide health coverage to uninsured children and WCP began to use its money to help families in other ways.
What do WCP members do?	Raise money, a lot of it, by throwing an open house at Walters' home each summer where as many as 800 women socialize, eat gourmet food and enjoy an evening in the country. The food, prepared by executive chef Mary Brady of Diamond Jim Brady's Bistro in Novi, and drinks are donated. Three classical musicians play for free. Most of the men in attendance pay for the privilege of acting as bartenders and waiters. WCP funds its ChildCare Commitment program, which subsidizes child care costs for low-income families who don't qualify for government aid.
Why do they do it?	"Dual objectives," Walters said. "We have kept our goal of trying to bring women together every year. I think that's partially why it's grown so much. Women come back every year and see friends and have great laughs. There's a lot of networking. But we also have this goal of raising money for child care for low-income families. We're amazed at the success that we've had. Last year, we raised over \$230,000. In this economy, we have raised just about the same amount of money so far this year. The average contribution that women are giving this year is up."
Who benefits?	Struggling families who need good child care but can't afford it. One recipient from last year is Paulette Pashenee, 41, of Wyandotte, who needed help with day care costs for her three children after her husband, Jonathan Sedoskey, was disabled in a car accident in February 2005. Sedoskey died Monday of a heart attack at age 38. "They were just there for us," Pashenee said Tuesday of WCP. "It's a program set up where, if you're not quite eligible for state assistance or federal assistance, it's something that will help you over the hump. And it really has."
Can I still attend the party?	Yes. It's 5:30-8 p.m. today. Tickets are \$125 at the door, 2955 Morrow Lane, Milford. There's a map on the group's Web site, www.WomensCaringProgram.org . Dress is business casual. There are no speeches; the gathering is strictly nonpolitical.
	By Jack Kresnak at 313-223-4544 or email at jkresnak@freepress.com